I affirm: Economic sanctions ought not be used to achieve foreign policy objectives

Adam Winkler defines economic sanctions,

Winkler, Adam (holds a B.S.F.S. from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a J.D. from New York University School of Law) “Just Sanctions” The Johns Hopkins University Press. Human Rights Quarterly 21.1 (1999) 133-155

**Economic sanctions are limitations on trade or access to markets enacted to encourage a target nation to behave in a way preferred by the sanctioning nations**. Economic sanctions cover four types of trade limitations: "(a) restrictions on the flow of goods, (b) restrictions on the flow of services, (c) restrictions on the flow of money, and (d) control of markets themselves in order to reduce or nullify the target's chance of gaining access to them." [18](http://208.34.222.250/bin/rdas.dll/RDAS_SVR=muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v021/21.1winkler.html" \l "FOOT18) Some examples include trade embargoes, restrictions on the importation of metals, petroleum, or other goods and commodities, and freezing foreign assets, lines of credit, or development aid. **A definitive characteristic of economic sanctions is that they are specifically intended to cause economic harm to another state. The basic idea is that "the burden of economic hardship imposed by sanctions will become intolerable"** **[19](http://208.34.222.250/bin/rdas.dll/RDAS_SVR=muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v021/21.1winkler.html" \l "FOOT19) to the citizens of the target state, who in turn will pressure their leaders to change undesirable policies**. [20](http://208.34.222.250/bin/rdas.dll/RDAS_SVR=muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v021/21.1winkler.html" \l "FOOT20) Unlike domestic economic policies, which may have unintentional economic effects abroad, sanctions are adopted specifically to harm the economy in a target country. In this way, **sanctions** are similar to war; both **are used to inflict harm intentionally upon a target nation in order to alter its policies or conduct.**

As ought implies desirability, I value A Desirable Foreign Policy Tool. This means that the goal of a foreign policy objective would be achieved through a tool, such as economic sanctions. The standard for a desirable foreign policy tool is Decreasing Target Regime Power. This is true, because

A) Powerful regimes cause massive suffering and death. Erich Weede argues,

Erich Weede (Professor of Sociology at the University of Bonn) Winter 2008: Human Rights, Limited Government, and Capitalism. http://www.cato.org/pubs/journal/cj28n1/cj28n1-3.pdf

In this context, one should recall that **about** **169 million people have been killed by states or their governments in the 20th century** (Rummel 1994). Communists and National Socialists established the most murderous regimes. Among the victims of communism, there are tens of millions of deaths from starvation after the coerced collectivization of agriculture in Stalin’s Soviet Union or Mao’s China. Although the 20th century suffered two world wars and other bloody wars, **fewer people died on the battlefield** or because of bombing campaigns **than have been murdered or starved to death by their own governments. Whoever wants to protect human rights should therefore first of all focus on the necessity of protecting people from the state and its abuses of power.**

B) Economic sanctions definitionally involve weakening a regime, insofar as they are implemented to make a government change their policies. If a government becomes stronger, there would be no reason to comply with a foreign nation’s request.

C) If nations democratize, they are significantly more likely to contribute to world peace. Larry Diamond writes,

Diamond, Larry (Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution) “Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives.” A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Carnegie Corporation of New York, December, 1995.

The experience of this century offers important lessons. **Countries that govern themselves in a truly democratic fashion do not go to war with one another.** They do not aggress against their neighbors to aggrandize themselves or glorify their leaders. **Democratic governments do not ethnically "cleanse" their own populations, and they are much less likely to** **face ethnic insurgency**. **Democracies do not sponsor terrorism against one another. They do not build weapons of mass destruction to use on or to threaten one another.** Democratic countries form more reliable, open, and enduring trading partnerships. In the long run they offer better and more stable climates for investment. **They are more environmentally responsible because they must answer to their own citizens**, who organize to protest the destruction of their environments. **They are better bets to honor international treaties since they value legal obligations and because their openness makes it much more difficult to breach agreements in secret**. Precisely **because, within their own borders, they respect competition, civil liberties, property rights, and the rule of law, democracies are the only reliable foundation on which a new world order of international security and prosperity can be built.**

My thesis and sole contention argue that economic sanctions create a rally-round-the-flag-effect, strengthening the targeted regime and decreasing the chance of democratization.

Subpoint A: Sanctions strengthen the regimes they target by making citizens dependent on the government. Tom Niblock explains,

Niblock, Tom [Professor at Exeter]. “Pariah States & Sanctions in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya, Sudan.” Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder, London. 2001.

Second, **economic sanctions have tended to strengthen regimes.** The assumption that sanctions will help the population by opening opportunities for civilian forces to overthrow an oppressive and undemocratic regime, therefore, is unjustified. There are three processes through which such strengthening can occur. **First, the impact of the sanctions tends to make populations even more dependent on the government, mainly for provision of the basic rations needed for survival. The rationing system becomes an effective instrument for control. This has happened in both Iraq and Libya.**

When a government is in control of basic needs, citizens must depend on the regime for survival. As a result, resistance is futile. Henkin in 09,

Yagil Henkin (Associate Fellow at the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies.) “How to effectively sanction Hamas” The Jerusalem Post August 9, 2009 Sunday

Comprehensive **economic****sanctions**can backfire; they tend to **consolidate regimes**. While some theories hold that sanctions cause citizens to rally around the flag, **economist David Rowe**, in his book Manipulating the Market, **suggests** a very different mechanism: **sanctions give the regime total control over the distribution of goods, making the population more dependent on it and thus less likely to resist. The population cannot ruffle feathers if it wishes to eat, while Hamas can sell whatever international aid it receives. In other words, had Marie Antoinette controlled the supply of cakes in France, she could have galvanized the population to fight for her cause - and the French revolution would have waited for another opportunity. Hamas's habitual looting of aid and food demonstrates that this is indeed the case in Gaza.**

Subpoint B: Ideological mindsets make the citizenry rally round the flag. Niblock 2,

Niblock, Tom [Professor at Exeter]. “Pariah States & Sanctions in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya, Sudan.” Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder, London. 2001.

**Second,** sanctions may strengthen a regime’s ideological legitimacy. **If the regime has projected itself to its population through an ideology built around nationalism – where external powers** (especially Western powers) **are seen as imperialist crusaders** intent on undermining local sovereignty and indigenous interests – **then the imposition of** Western-orchestrated UN **sanctions will reinforce the regime’s** central ideological **message**. The regime’s analysis of the international order will carry conviction. The Iraqi, Libyan, and Sudanese regimes have all purveyed, from their inceptions, a nationalistic ideology. **The imposition of sanctions, therefore, can be and has been used by those regimes to buttress popular acceptance of the core ideology and to mobilize popular support.**

Addis provides two additional warrants,

Addis, Adeno (William Ray Forrester Professor of Public and Constitutional Law at Tulane University Law School) “Economic Sanctions and the Problem of Evil” Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 3 pp. 573-623. August 2003

**Not only is it the case that ordinary citizens often have no influence over the regimes of target states, but at times the severity of these sanctions do in fact force those citizens to rally behind regimes that they do not like. This is so for two reasons. First, the regimes manage to convey to the populace that the sanctioners care very little about their lives and are prepared to sacrifice them to achieve their foreign policy objectives, one of which is replacing nationalist regimes with client regimes.** The regime's vulnerability is deftly transformed into the vulnerability of the nation itself. **Second, some regimes also manage to define the sanction as one action in a long line of historical attempts of one civilization demeaning and attacking another or one religious tradition demonizing another the West attempting to dominate the East, or Christianity engaged in its historical attempt to humiliate Islam. The particular action gets defined in the context of historical struggles where the victim is not simply the regime or even the particular state, but a grand tradition.** This will be discussed in greater detail later in the essay. But at the moment it is sufficient to note that sanctions may in fact build solidarity between the population and the target regime.

Subpoint C: Rally-round-the-flag occurs because the regime appears to be fighting off an international threat. Niblock 3,

Niblock, Tom [Professor at Exeter]. “Pariah States & Sanctions in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya, Sudan.” Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder, London. 2001.

**Third, the regime can gain some credit domestically by deftly defending the country from an external onslaught** (as perceived by the population). Its ability to maneuver successfully to build support in the international community, to withstand and circumvent a blockade, to bring in the basic goods needed by the population, and perhaps to throw doubt on the legality of what is being done to the country, can all strengthen popular support. **This factor has been evident in both Iraq and Libya. Overall, the strengthening of regimes that are cavalier in their treatment of human rights is not conducive either to regional or to international stability.**

And, this priniple is empirically verified. Ivan Eland writes,

Ivan Eland, “Sanctions: Useless or Worse than Useless?” Anti-War.com, November 28, 2006

**Also undermining the achievement of sanctions' political goals is the "rally around the flag" effect. When attacked, either militarily or economically, by a foreign power, the populace of a country usually rallies around the existing leader – no matter how odious he or she may be. Fidel Castro, despite the disastrous consequences of his centralization of the Cuban economy, has been able to blame poverty and economic stagnation on the coercive economic measures imposed by his powerful northern neighbor. In other words, the Cuban people likely would have thrown out Castro long ago if the United States hadn't declared him "enemy number one." Also, the most comprehensive international sanctions in world history against Iraq – which at least initially had a grinding and impoverishing effect on the country – were unsuccessful in getting rid of the tyrant Saddam Hussein.**

Subpoint D: Economic sanctions decrease the chance of democracy by harming the middle class. Robert O’Quinn writes,

O’Quinn, Robert (writer for the Heritage Foundation) “A User’s Guide to Economic Sanctions.” The Heritage Foundation. June 25, 1997

Even worse, unilateral **economic sanctions often prove counterproductive by undermining a target country's emerging middle class rather than its political leaders. In many countries, including Chile, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, the development of a large, financially secure middle class was necessary before their authoritarian governments could give way to democracy.** Unilateral U.S. **economic sanctions strike hardest at Western-educated business managers and professionals who interact most often with the rest of the world and who are the most amenable to foreign influence. By hammering the international sector of a target country's economy,** unilateral **sanctions** may **retard the growth of a middle class and thereby slow the process of democratization.**

The alternative is to offer democratic aid. Knack,

Knack, Stephen (Senior Research Economist, The World Bank) “Does Foreign Aid Promote Democracy?” International Studies Quarterly, 48, 251-266. 2004

**Aid** potentially **can contribute to democratization in several ways: (1) through technical assistance focusing on electoral processes, the strengthening of legislatures and judiciaries as checks on executive power, and the promotion of civil society organizations, including a free press; (2) through conditionality; and (3) by improving education and increasing per capita incomes, which research shows are conducive to democratization.** This study provides a multivariate analysis of the impact of aid on democratization in a large sample of recipient nations over the 1975-2000 period. Using two different democracy indexes and two different measures of aid intensity, no evidence is found that aid promotes democracy. This result is robust to alternative model specifications and estimation techniques, including the use of exogenous instruments for aid. Results are similar if the analysis is confined to the post-Cold War period (1990-2000), despite the reduced dependence of the U.S. and other donors on pro-Western authoritarian regimes among aid recipient nations.